

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 SSO-00 NSCE-00 PA-01

INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 SP-02 NEA-07 PM-03

EB-04 /049 W

-----130023 011319Z /12

O 011210Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 659

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 6819

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, CG, BE

SUBJECT: THREATENED DIPLOMATIC BREAK WITH BRUSSELS

REF A) STATE 167563; B) CUTLER/JUNIOR TELECON JUNE 30

1. ZAIRIAN TELEVISION NEWS EVENING JUNE 30 INCLUDED ANNOUNCEMENT THAT MOBUTU HAD CALLED RESTRICTED MEETING OF POLITICAL BUREAU AT BANDUNDU (WHERE MOBUTU NOW VISITING) ON JULY 1 TO DISCUSS SUSPENSION OF RELATIONS WITH BELGIUM. REPORT ALSO NOTED THAT RABAT WOULD BE ASKED TO REPRESENT ZAIRIAN INTERESTS IN BRUSSELS.

2. WE IMMEDIATELY CHECKED THIS REPORT WITH CND, WHICH CONFIRMED THAT MOBUTU INTENDED TO BREAK RELATIONS. CND INDICATED GOB FAILURE TO CURB ZAIRIAN OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES IN BELGIUM WAS MAIN CAUSE FOR ACTION. CND ALSO SAID SPECIAL MEETING OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WOULD BE CALLED JULY 2 TO ENDORSE DECISION.

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3. EARLIER IN THE DAY JUNE 30 I HAD DISCUSSED BRIEFLY WITH BELGIAN AMBASSADOR RITTWEGER DE MOOR AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED THAT MORNING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS IN WHICH MOBUTU HAD COMPLAINED ABOUT BELGIUM'S REFUSAL TO FORCE HIS ZAIRIAN CRITICS LIVING THERE TO SEEK REFUGEE STATUS AND CONSEQUENTLY ABSTAIN FROM ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY. MOBUTU WENT ON TO CONCLUDE THAT HE WOULD

"HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING HOW BRUSSELS AND KINSHASA CAN LIVE TOGETHER HARMONIOUSLY" UNTIL BELGIUM COOPERATES ON THIS ISSUE. RITTWEGER DE MOOR INDICATED HE WAS NOT OVERLY CONCERNED AT INTERVIEW, NOTING THAT MOBUTU'S IRRITATION WITH OPPOSITION ACTIVITY IN BELGIUM WAS LONG-STANDING ISSUE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. SUBSEQUENT TELEVISION ANNOUNCEMENT RE SUSPENSION OF RELATIONS APPARENTLY CAME AS COMPLETE SURPRISE TO RITTWEGER DE MOOR.

4. IN RESPONSE TO CND'S QUERY RE US REACTION, EARLY MORNING JULY 1 WE PASSED VIEWS CONTAINED REFTEL TO CND CHIEF, WHO WAS TO SEE MOBUTU PRIOR TO POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING. MEANWHILE, AZAP AND BOTH MORNING PAPERS JULY 1 CARRIED STORIES WHICH REFERRED SPECIFICALLY

TO THE ACTIONS IN BRUSSELS OF ZAIRE'S FORMER AMBASSADOR TO IRAN MBEKA AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF IRRITATION AND INDICATED THAT MOROCCO WOULD REPRESENT ZAIRIAN INTERESTS IN BRUSSELS IF ZAIRE BREAKS RELATIONS WITH BELGIUM.

5. I MET WITH RITTWEGER DE MOOR MID-MORNING JULY 1 AND INFORMED HIM OF ACTION WE HAD TAKEN. HE CONFIRMED THAT MOBUTU'S CURRENT ANGER STEMS PRIMARILY FROM THE MBEKA CASE. ACCORDING TO RITTWEGER DE MOOR, MBEKA HAS APPLIED FOR POLITICAL REFUGEE STATUS AND, PENDING DECISION, HAS VISA TO REMAIN IN BELGIUM WHICH VALID FOR REST OF THE YEAR. WHILE GOB DID CANCEL PRESS CONFERENCE HE WAS PLANNING, MBEKA HAS BEEN WRITING LETTERS TO PROMINENT ZAIRIANS IN KINSHASA URGING THEM TO OPPOSE MOBUTU REGIME. FOREIGN
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MINISTRY HAS COMPLAINED ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY TO RITTWEGER DE MOOR. ALSO, MOBUTU HAS BEEN IRRITATED BY PUBLIC REFERENCES IN BRUSSELS (WHICH ATTRIBUTED TO BELGIAN EMBASSY IN KINSHASA) TO IMPENDING FOOD CRISIS IN ZAIRE. WHEN BELGIANS HERE SUGGESTED THAT BELGIAN TROOPS MIGHT UNDERTAKE DISTRIBUTION OF EMERGENCY FOOD SHIPMENTS WHICH HAVE ALREADY STARTED ARRIVING, FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA SENT RITTWEGER DE MOOR INTEMPERATE LETTER IMPLYING THIS TOGETHER WITH REPORTS OF FOOD CRISIS WAS EFFORT TO CAUSE TROUBLE FOR MOBUTU REGIME. (FOLLOWING RITTWEGER DE MOOR'S PROTEST ABOUT LETTER TO PRESIDENCY, MOBUTU ORDERED THAT LETTER BE CONSIDERED AS NOT EVER SENT.)

6. RITTWEGER DE MOOR ALSO SAID MOBUTU HAD IN EARLY JUNE SENT LETTERS TO BOTH THE KING AND PM TINDEMANS COMPLAINING ABOUT GOB POLICIES TOWARD ZAIRIAN DISSIDENTS. KING HAD CONFINED HIS ANSWER TO ESSENTIALLY "LET'S STILL BE FRIENDS", LEAVING MORE SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE TO TINDEMANS. RITTWEGER DE MOOR DELIVERED LATTER RESPONSE ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO IN SEALED ENVELOPE AND CLAIMS HE IS STILL UNAWARE OF CONTENTS. HE SPECULATES, HOWEVER, THAT REPLY MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO MOBUTU'S CURRENT MOOD.

7. AT THIS POINT IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL HOW FAR MOBUTU WILL ACTUALLY GO TOWARD BREAKING RELATIONS. FACT THAT MATTER HAS

ALREADY BEEN WIDELY PUBLICIZED IN LOCAL MEDIA MAY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO BACK DOWN COMPLETELY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE MAY BE ELEMENTS OF BLUFF AND THREAT IN ALL THIS, AS REFLECTED BY SOMEWHAT RESTRAINED TONE OF PRESS TREATMENT. IN ANY CASE, MY BELGIAN COLLEAGUE SAYS HE IS READY FOR ANYTHING. HE AGREES THAT BREAK COULD HAVE SERIOUS IMPACT ON BELGIANS AS WELL AS OTHER EXPATRIATES IN ZAIRE, NOTING THAT "EARLY DEPARTURES" BY BELGIANS FROM ZAIRE ON VACATION WERE ALREADY RUNNING FAR IN EXCESS OF THE NORMAL SUMMER EXODUS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS INTERRUPTION, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KINSHA06819
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780272-0601
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197807103/aaaadiqu.tel
Line Count: 125
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7666566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 167563
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1854714
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THREATENED DIPLOMATIC BREAK WITH BRUSSELS
TAGS: PEPR, CG, BE
To: STATE BRUSSELS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7666566b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014